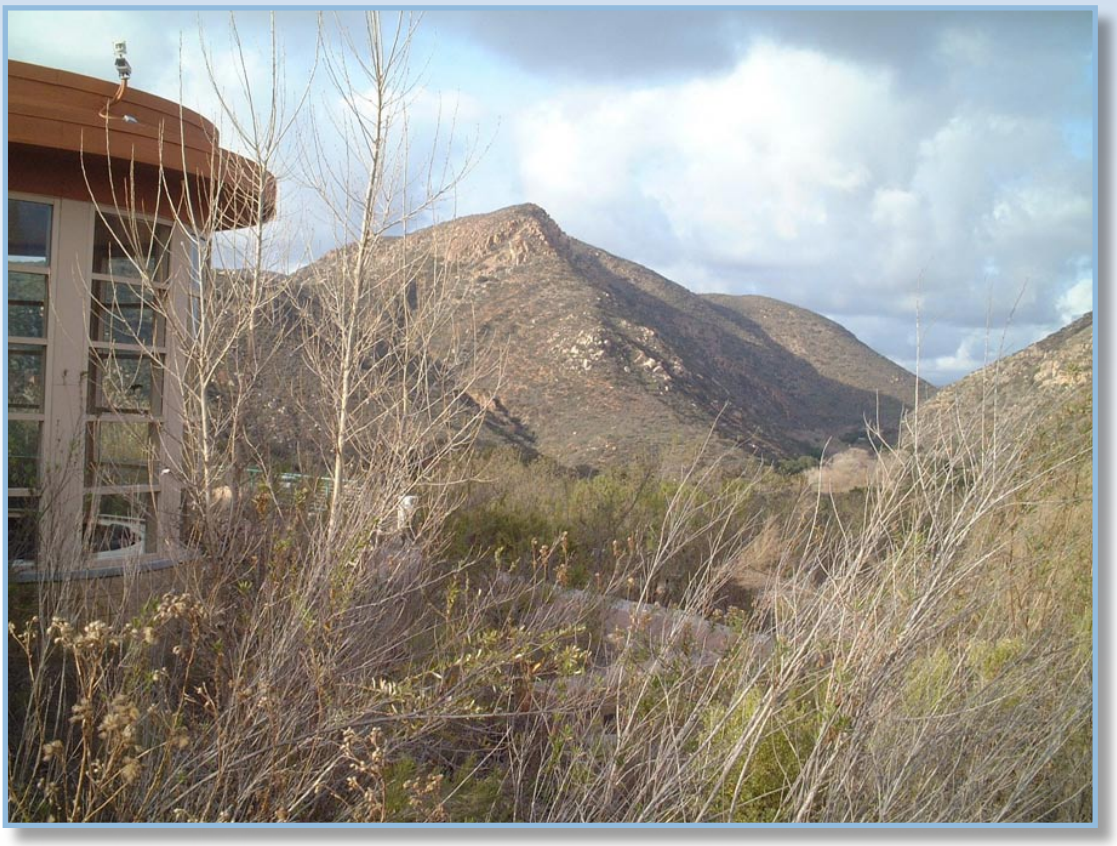

Mission Trails Design District

MISSION TRAILS

DESIGN DISTRICT ORDINANCE AND DESIGN MANUAL

Printed on recycled paper.

This information, or this document (or portions thereof), will be made available in alternative formats upon request.

MISSION TRAILS DESIGN DISTRICT

The following amendments have been incorporated into this March 2007 posting of this Plan:

Amendment	Date Approved by Planning Commission	Resolution Number	Date Adopted by City Council	Resolution Number
Revisions approved for design guidelines and boundary changes	July 24, 2003	3403	September 23, 2003	R-298405

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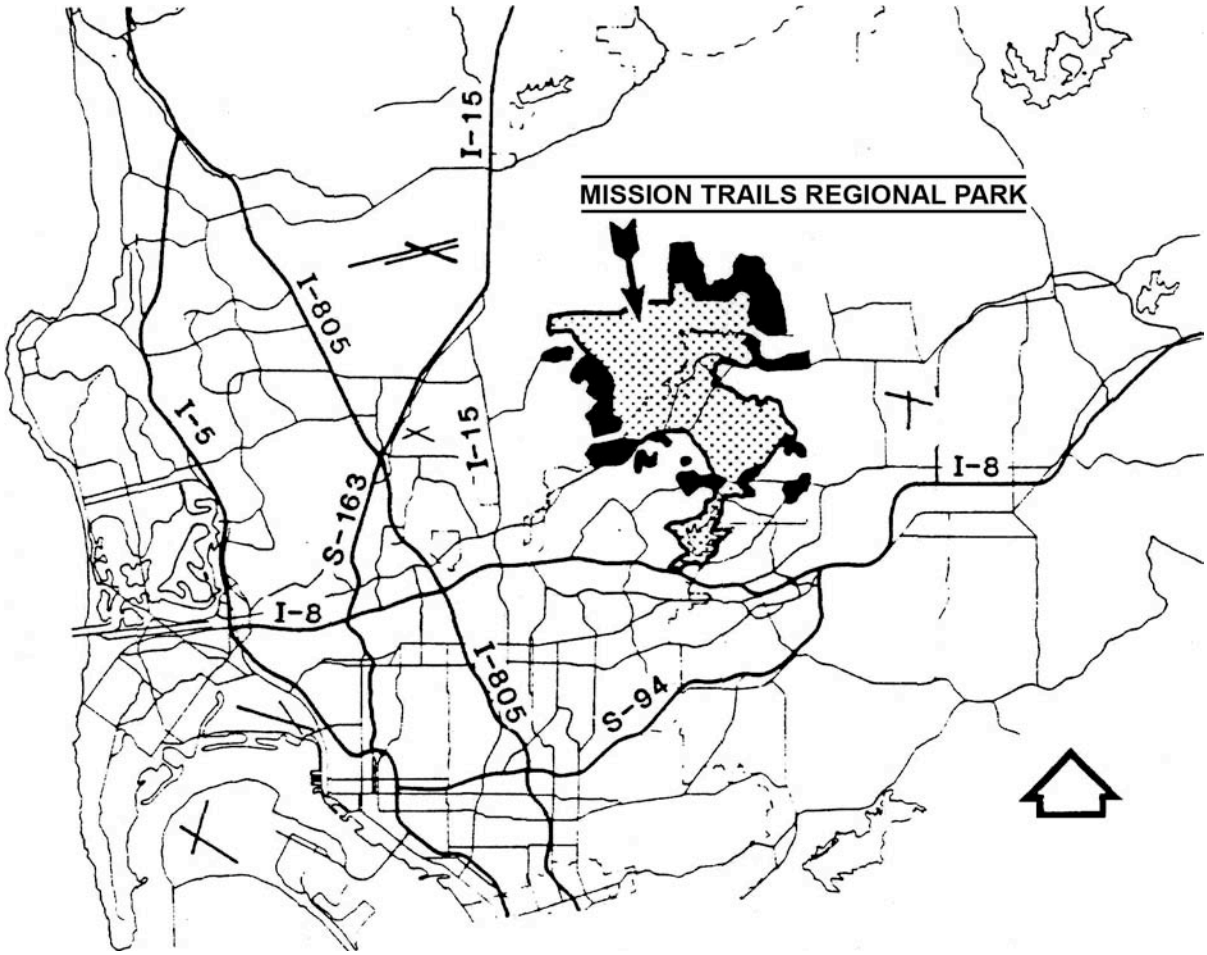
INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The Mission Trails Design District Ordinance and Design Manual covers some 2,000 acres adjacent to Mission Trails Regional Park within the Navajo, Tierrasanta and East Elliott communities. The Master Development Plan for Lake Murray, Cowles and Fortuna Mountains Regional Park (now Mission Trails Park) provided the direction for the preparation of this ordinance and design manual by calling for design guidelines to control development in the sensitive areas around the Park.



The Mission Trails Design District is comprised of three subareas:

SUBAREA 1

Opportunity Areas include the commercially and multifamily residentially zoned sections of the District which could potentially redevelop according to existing zoning and the adopted community plan.

SUBAREA 2

Hillside Areas include steep, undeveloped hillsides presently under the HR (Hillside Review) Overlay zone, as well as undeveloped non-HR zoned areas contiguous to the Regional Park and HR areas.

SUBAREA 3

Mission Gorge Areas include portions of Mission Gorge adjacent to the Park along the San Diego River.

Design guidelines have been prepared for each subarea to assist in evaluating new development. Because most of the district is or will be developed for residential use, the design guidelines are primarily intended to assist in the evaluation of new residential development.

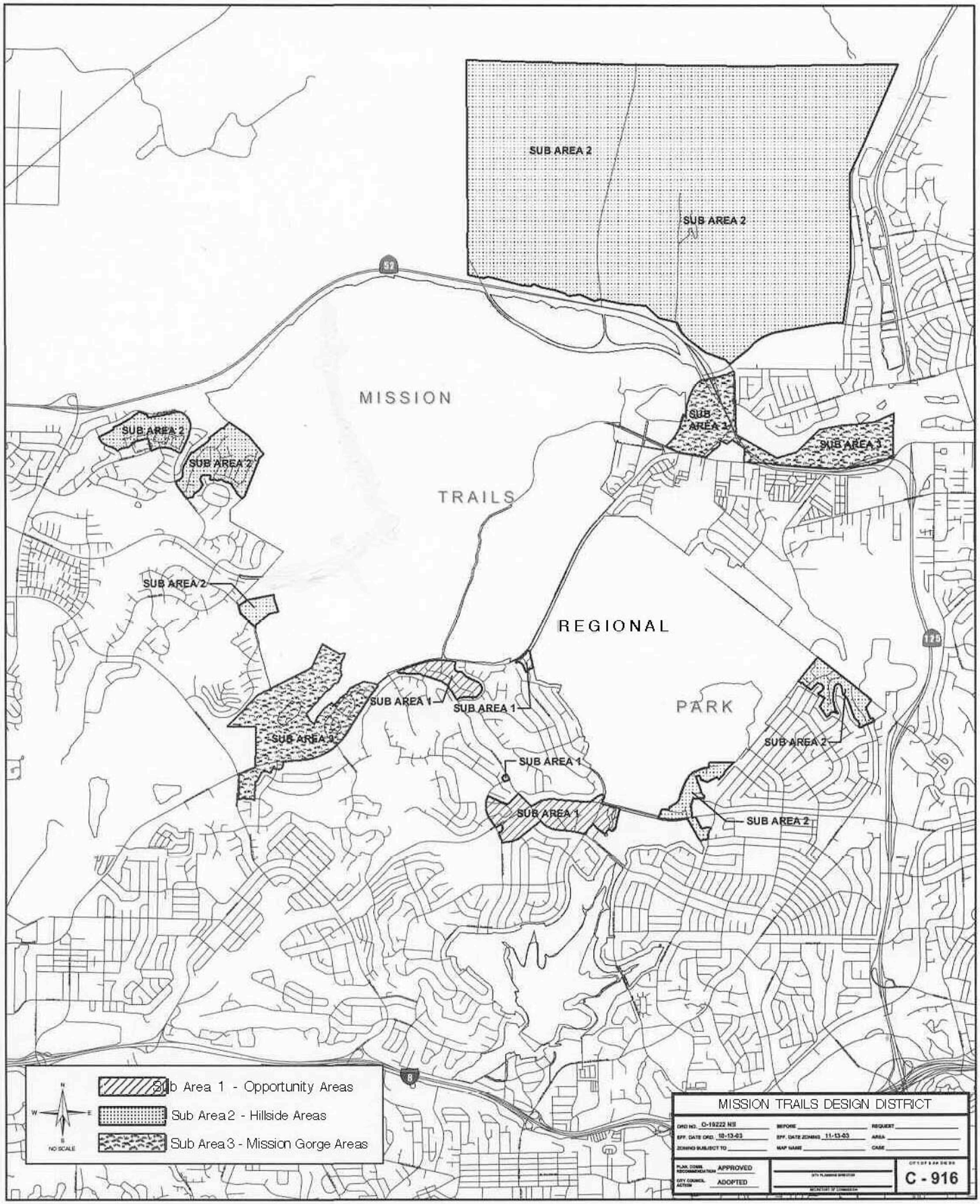
The guidelines developed for Subarea 1, which is primarily a commercial and multifamily residential zoned area, are designed to ensure that new development should not radically change the existing character of the surrounding neighborhood. Major concerns are the bulk, scale and height of new development.

Guidelines for Subarea 2, which is primarily the steep undeveloped hillside areas adjacent to the Park, are basically concerned with the impacts associated with hillside development and attendant grading.

The guidelines for Subarea 3 are most concerned with protecting the visual linkages to and from the park in the Mission Gorge area.

The design guidelines will be used by the Planning Department in evaluating the impact and compliance of all new development projects and permit requests within the District.

DESIGN MANUAL


SUB AREA 2
SUB AREA 2
52
MISSION
TRAILS
REGIONAL
PARK
SUB AREA 2
SUB AREA 2
SUB AREA 1
SUB AREA 1
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8
Sub Area 1 - Opportunity Areas
Sub Area 2 - Hillside Areas
Sub Area 3 - Mission Gorge Areas
NO SCALE
MISSION TRAILS DESIGN DISTRICT
ORD NO. O-19222 NS
EFF. DATE ORD. 10-13-03
ZONING SUBJECT TO
BEFORE
EFF. DATE ZONING 11-13-03
MAP NAME
REQUEST
AREA
CASE
PLAN. COMM. RECOMMENDATION APPROVED
CITY COUNCIL ACTION ADOPTED
C - 916

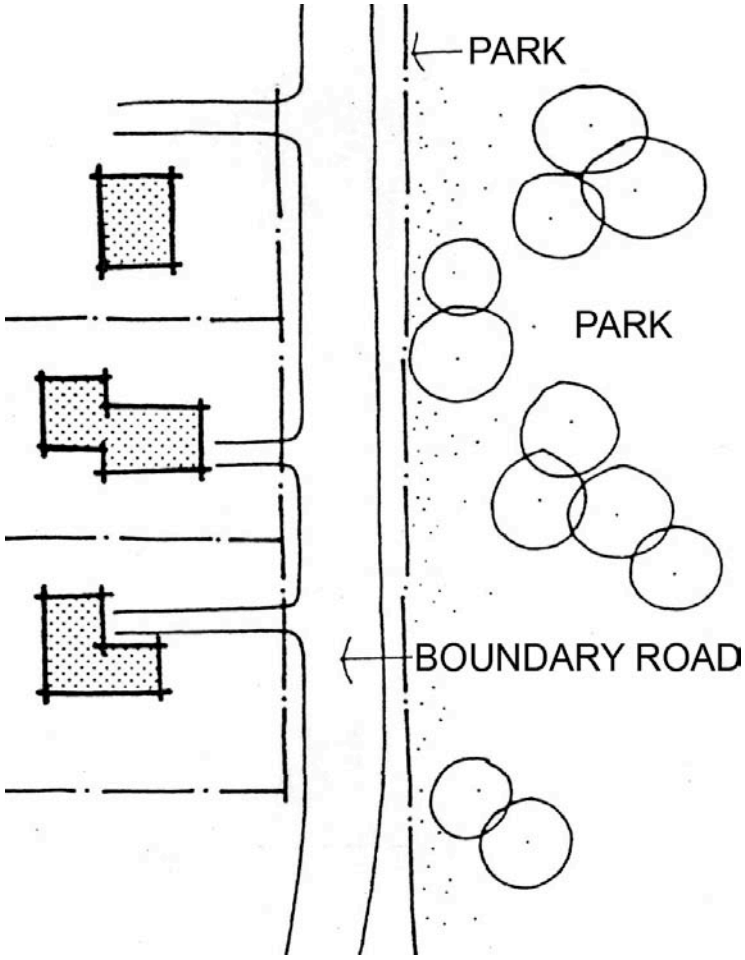
ALL SUBAREAS

The following design principles apply to all subareas within the Mission Trails Design District:

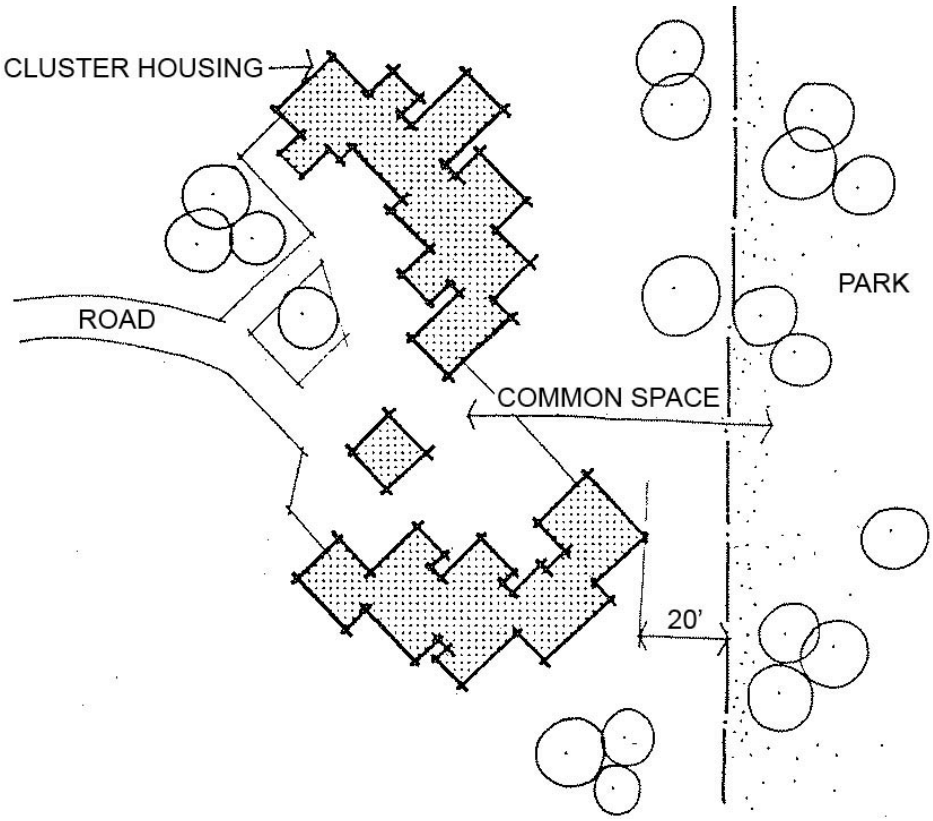
POLICY: NEW DEVELOPMENT SHOULD RELATE TO THE PARK AND EXISTING LANDSCAPING IN THE PARK.

A. New developments shall maintain contiguous public access immediately adjacent to the park edge or boundaries.

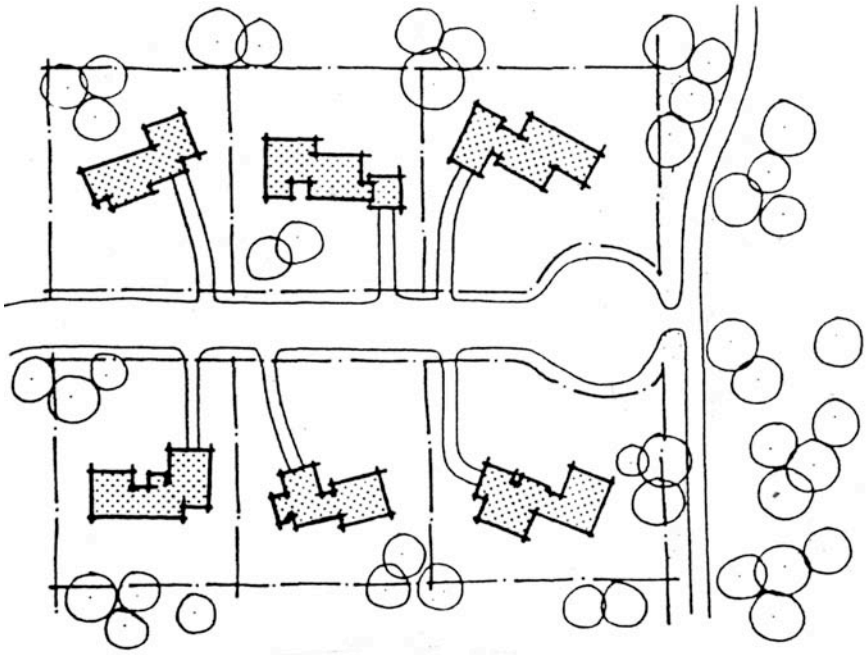
   1) In a conventional subdivision, rear property lines shall not be permitted contiguous to the park boundary. Access roads or bike paths could buffer park from private yard. Wherever possible, pathways should provide linkages to trails within the park.



2) In a Planned Residential Development, common recreational/open space areas shall abut the park boundary. Private property lines shall not be permitted within 20 feet of the park's edge or boundary.



B. New development immediately abutting the park should provide open space linkages, bike/pedestrian (and equestrian if in East Elliott) access to the park.



C. New landscaping should complement the park's existing plant palette in terms of color and shape to create a landscaping transition between the park and the built environment as well as serve as a visual extension of the park. Every landscape plan shall include a design statement explaining how the landscape plan relates to the Regional Park plant environment.

D. Architectural materials and colors for new development should be designed to blend into the natural backdrop of the Mission Trails Regional Park to provide a transition from the park. Architectural materials should be chosen to complement the Regional Park environment, and natural materials such as flagstone, river rocks, wood and tile should be considered for a portion of the facade. Architectural colors for exterior facades should be chosen from the color palette of the natural soil, rocks and plant life from the Regional Park. Extreme color selections should be avoided. Exterior accent colors should be chosen from the existing park environment.

E. No structure shall exceed four stories or 50 feet in height, including screening of mechanical equipment.

F. Citywide Wireless Communication Facilities Policy 600-43. The Citywide Communications Facilities Policy should be applied to the Mission Trails Design District with the following additional guidelines and considerations.

1) Screening - All wireless communication facilities should be fully screened from public view. The screening should be in the form of appropriate facade materials when the facility will be installed as part of a building, or adequately screened by landscaping when it will be free standing.

2) Landscaping - Landscaping should be used to screen the wireless communications facility equipment proposal when necessary to minimize the visual impact of the equipment. Vertical evergreen trees should be part of the proposal to screen the equipment.

3) Views to the Park - Any new Wireless Communication Facility should be constructed to maximize public views to the park, without creating new obstructions in the view shed.

SUBAREA 1 - OPPORTUNITY AREAS

The following design principles apply to Subarea 1 of the Mission Trails Design District:

POLICY: THE SCALE OF NEW BUILDINGS SHOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THE EXISTING CHARACTER OF THE REGIONAL PARK.

A. Relate the height of new buildings to the height of existing development.

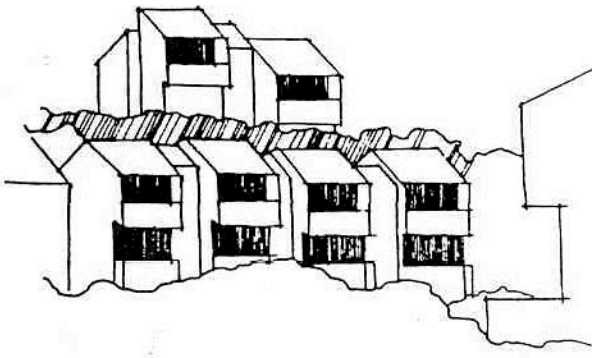
   The relationship between areas of low-profile buildings and areas of taller or more visually prominent buildings can be made more compatible if the transition in building height is gradual.

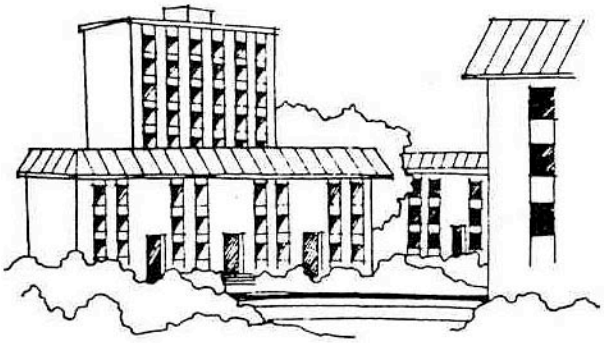
   Exceptionally tall buildings immediately adjacent to low buildings usually create problems such as excessive shadows, undesirable wind tunnels, lack of privacy and view blockage.

B. Tall buildings should occur closest to centers of activity and community services to encourage economic, energy and transportation efficiency and express the functional importance of these centers.

C. Building size should be scaled to human proportion and articulated to reflect a diversity of facade elements. For example, a group of apartments should not present a bulky, monolithic appearance against the parkscape.

Example: Properly articulated buildings tend to blend well into their natural surroundings.





Example: Slab structures tend to dominate and obscure the natural surroundings.

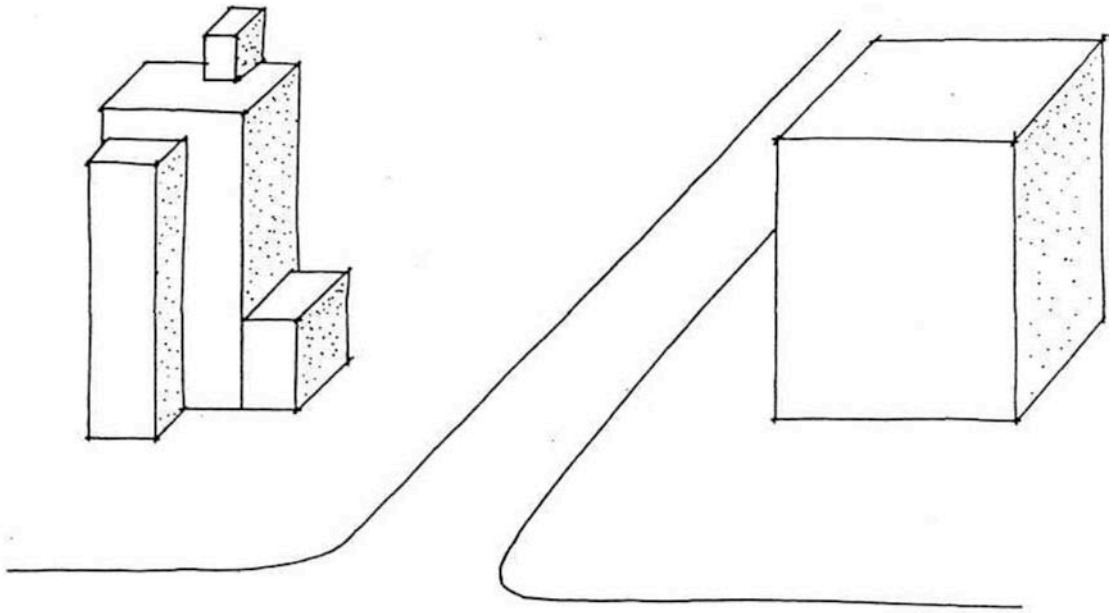
D. A building that does not share either a similar height or profile with adjoining structures should mitigate disruptive effects to a neighborhood by incorporating features of adjacent buildings.

1) Decorative features of adjacent buildings can make a new building appear a part of the contiguous theme.

2) A false front or parapet can partially disguise a building's height and give a harmonious profile with adjacent buildings.

E. The appearance of bulk in a structure should be mitigated by means of at least one and preferably a combination of the following factors so as to produce the impression of an aggregate of parts rather than a single building mass.

1) Major variations in the planes of wall surfaces, in either height or depth, that significantly alter the mass.

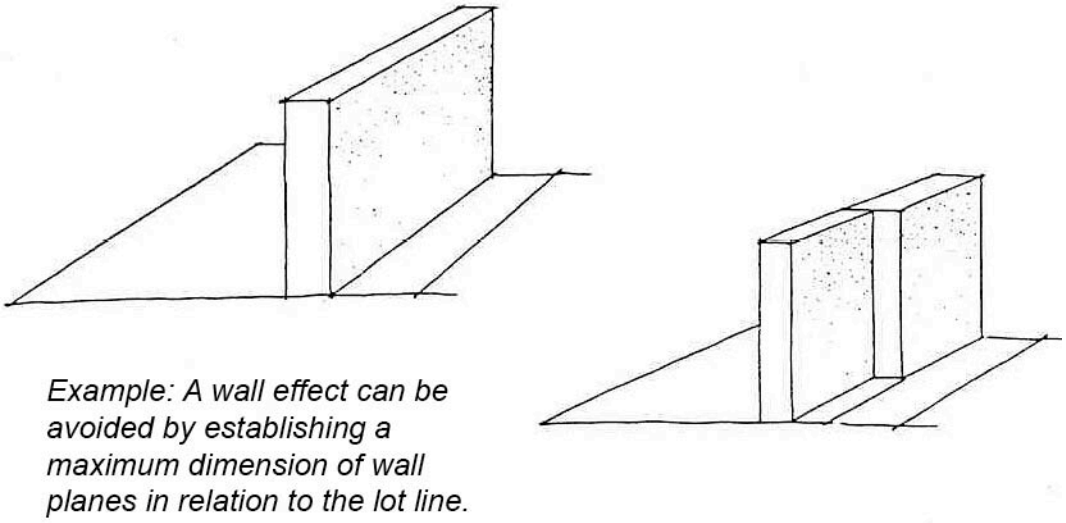


Example: Differences in the heights and depths of various portions of the building divide the mass into distinct elements, and create a transition between low- and mid-rise development.

Example: Uniform heights and depths bring attention to the building's total size.

2) Use of angled walls, and asymmetrical patterns of setbacks, use of pronounced faceting, carving or sculpturing techniques to avoid a square, boxy or flat silhouette.

3) The horizontal dimension of the plane of wall surface should not exceed 50 percent of the total dimension of the adjacent lot line.



Example: A wall effect can be avoided by establishing a maximum dimension of wall planes in relation to the lot line.

4) Building surfaces should be articulated and textured to reduce their apparent size. Buildings can be articulated with canopies, balconies, terraces, cornices, small windows and other architectural details. Buildings can be textured by using different materials, colors or facades to produce separate elements.

   a. Treat upper floors so that they actually, or seem to, set back and recede.

   b. Smaller architectural elements: Windows, cornices and other details should be not much larger than they would be on a single-family house.

F. All parking should be enclosed or underground.

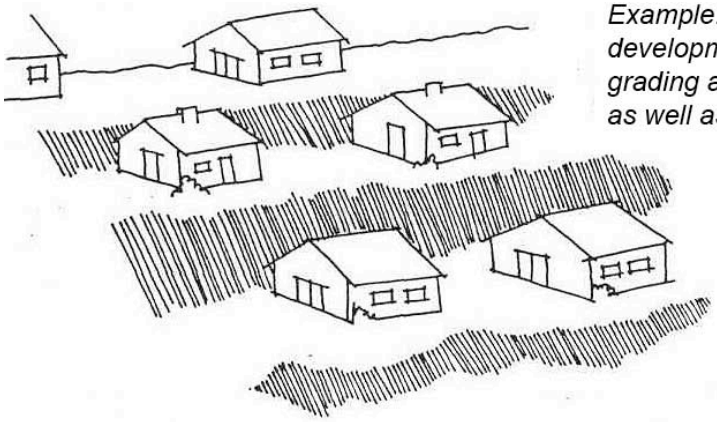
SUBAREA 2 - HILLSIDE AREAS

The following design principles apply to Subarea 2 of the Mission Trails Design District:

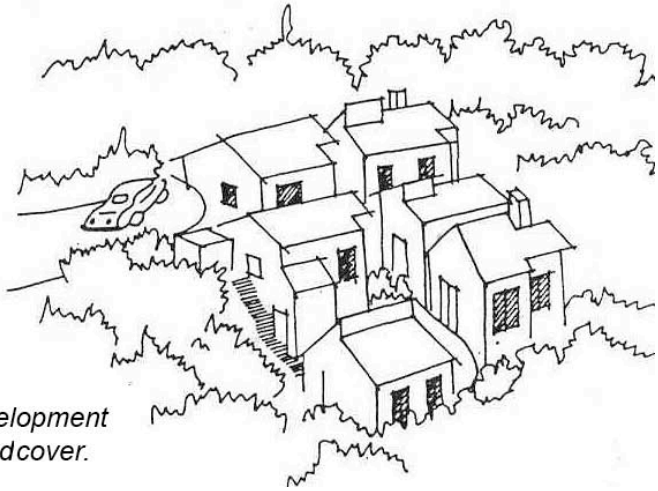
POLICY: HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT SHOULD RETAIN THE NATURAL CHARACTER OF THE LAND.

A. LAND PREPARATION/SITE PLANNING

1) Standard prepared pads (cut and fill grading) resulting in a terraced hillside and extensive removal of natural groundcover shall not be permitted.

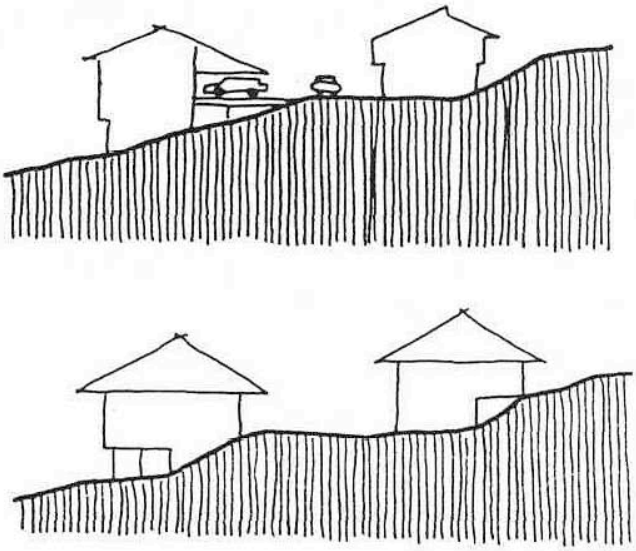


Example: Standard hillside subdivision development results in excessive grading and landform modification, as well as loss of natural groundcover.

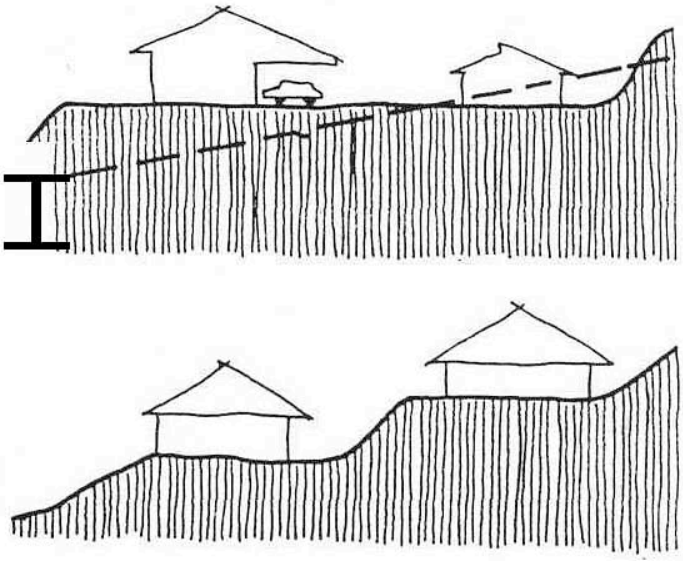


Example: Clustered and terraced development preserves natural landform and groundcover.

Example: Structures adapted to hillside conditions minimize earth moving requirements and resulting costs.

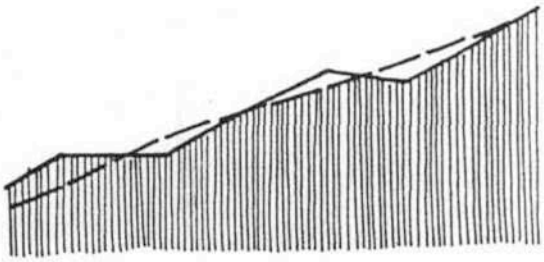


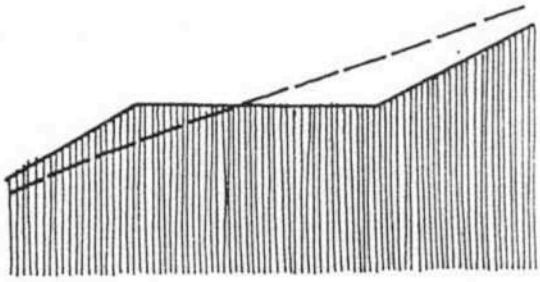
Example: Standard prepared pad – entire hillside is terraced and destroyed. The usable open land provided is minimal.



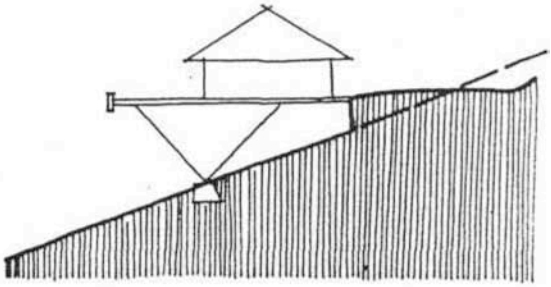
2) Where workable and appropriate, retaining walls should considered as an alternative to banks of cut and fill.

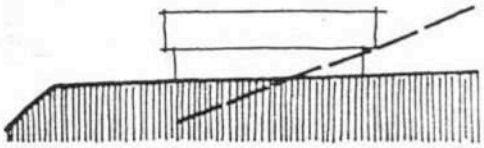
3) In steep terrain, plan buildings to fit into the hillside rather than altering the hillside to fit the buildings.





Example: Make level areas in smaller increments.

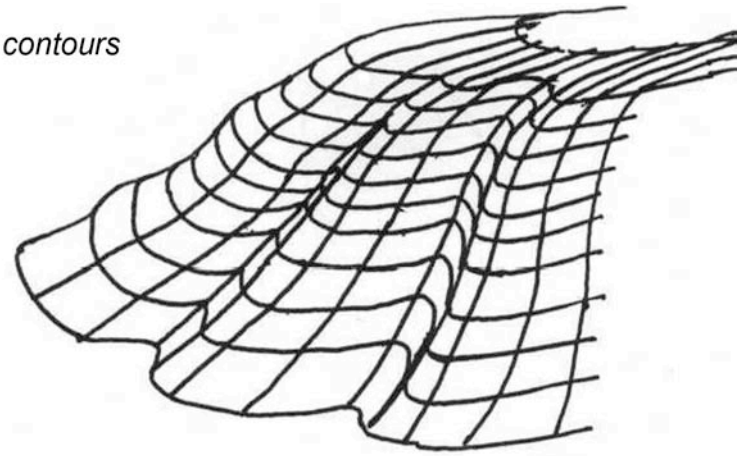




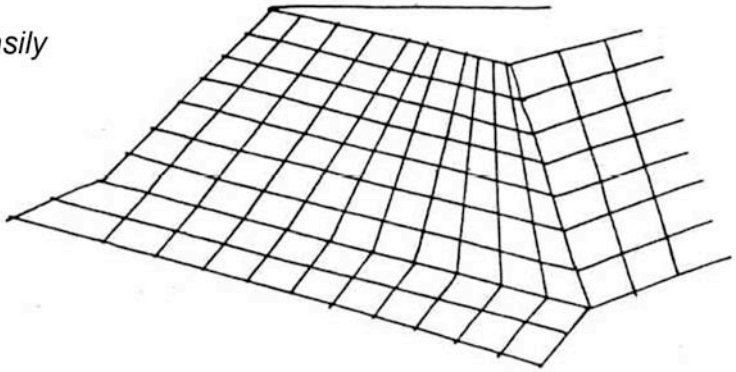
Example: Create level areas by structure rather than grading.

4) Grading should be contoured to preserve the natural landform, and facilitate planting and maintenance.

Example: Retain smooth contours and flow of groundform.



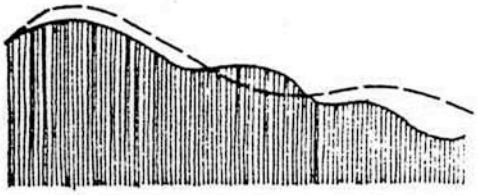
Example: Avoid harsh, easily eroded forms and high, steep banks.



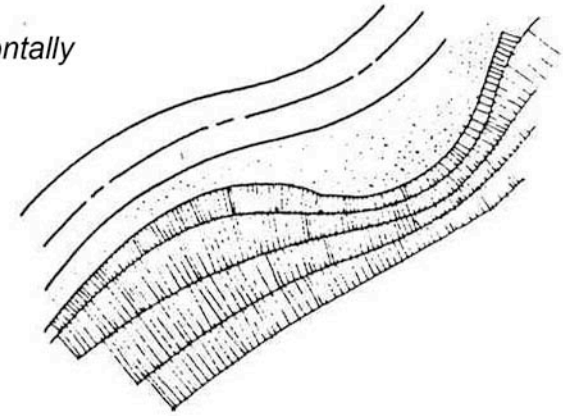
5) Altered natural land should be replanted with erosion retardant cover.

6) Man-made banks should avoid straight and unnatural slope faces.

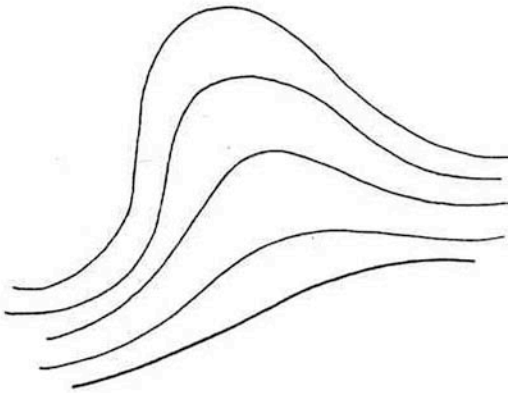
Example: Vary slope increments.



Example: Undulate banks horizontally (Plan View).



Example: Undulate banks vertically (Plan View).



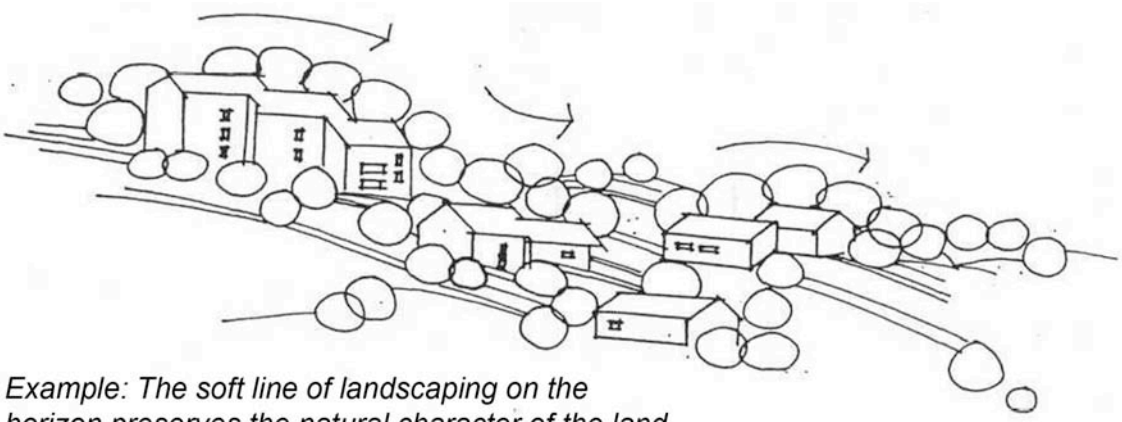
7) Only clustered development and structures that adjust to steep terrain shall be permitted.

   Clustering usually allows more units on a site than a conventional development on the same site, but development will be concentrated on the least sensitive land. The excessive economic and social cost of developing steep, ecologically sensitive, or scenic land can be avoided.

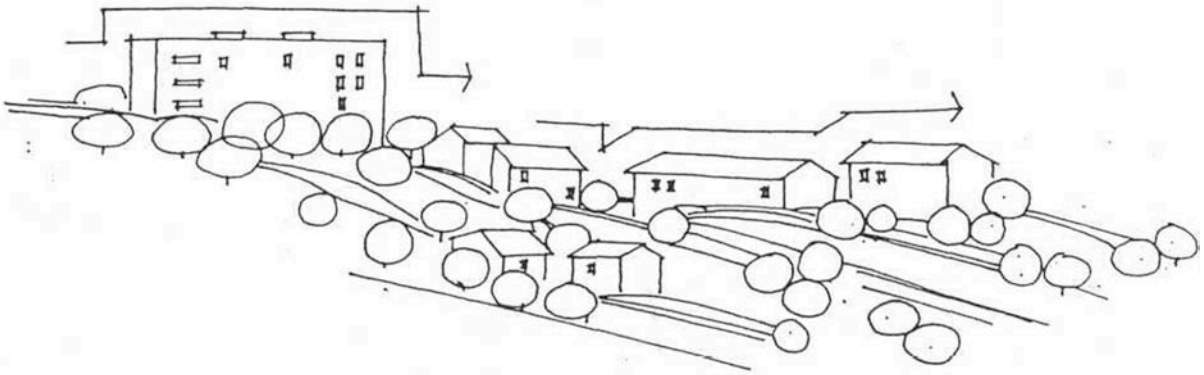
8) No development should be permitted on the crest of a hill or along a ridge.

   Only low-profile development should be allowed on canyon rims or ridges. Such development should be sensitively designed to fit in with the hillside and not be visually prominent.

9) Where it is impossible to avoid developing the crest of a hill or ridge, landscaping should be used to soften the visual impact of development.



Example: The soft line of landscaping on the horizon preserves the natural character of the land.



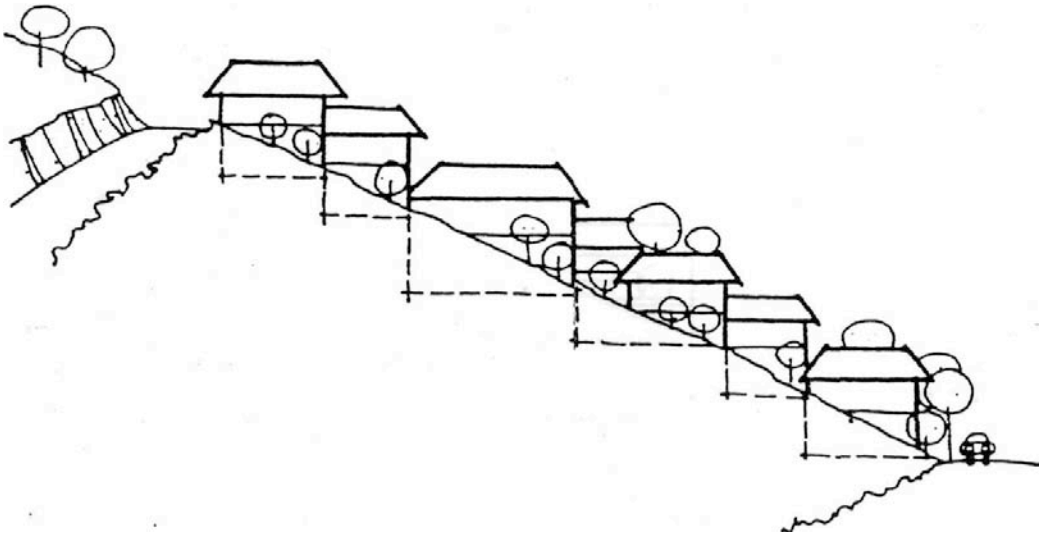
Example: Buildings dominate the profile of the land.

10) Hillside development shall not be permitted on slopes 50 percent or greater. The clustering concept should be applied to avoid those slopes.

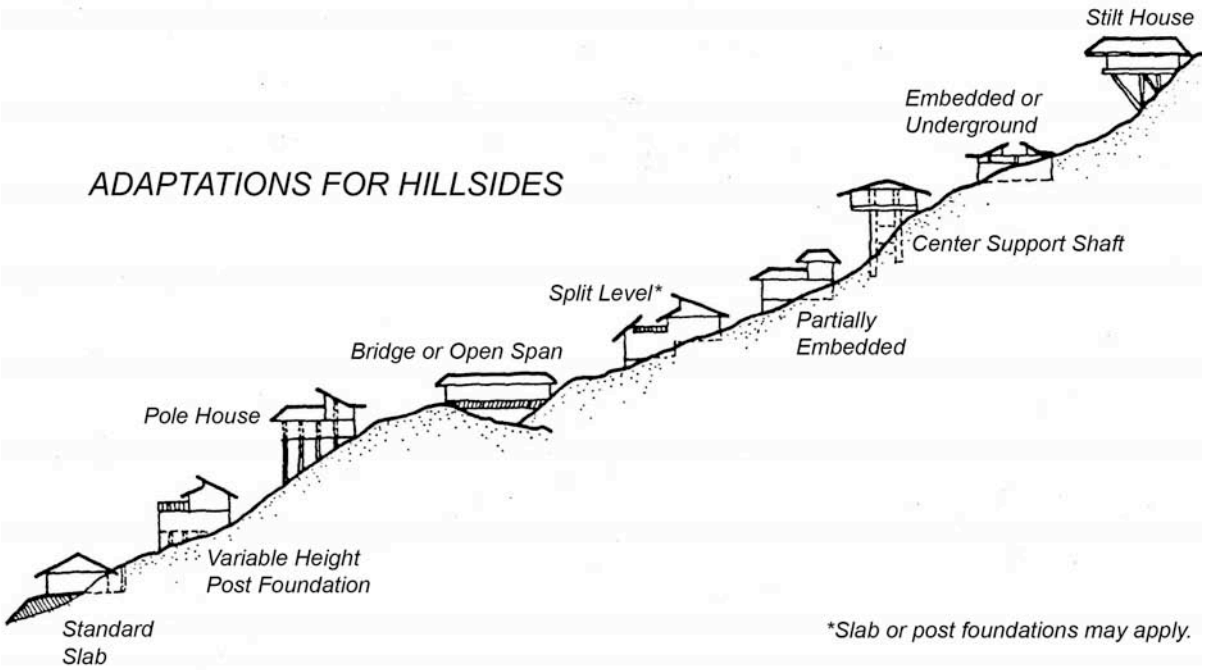
11) The following cluster development concepts should be considered for hillsides:

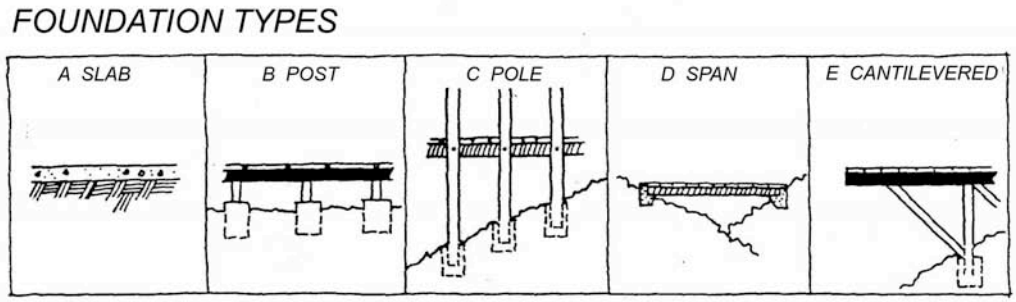
a. Development set into the contours of the hillside complementing the land's natural character.

b. Multiple "step down" development on existing slopes, maximizing views and opportunities to design rooftops as private outdoor spaces.



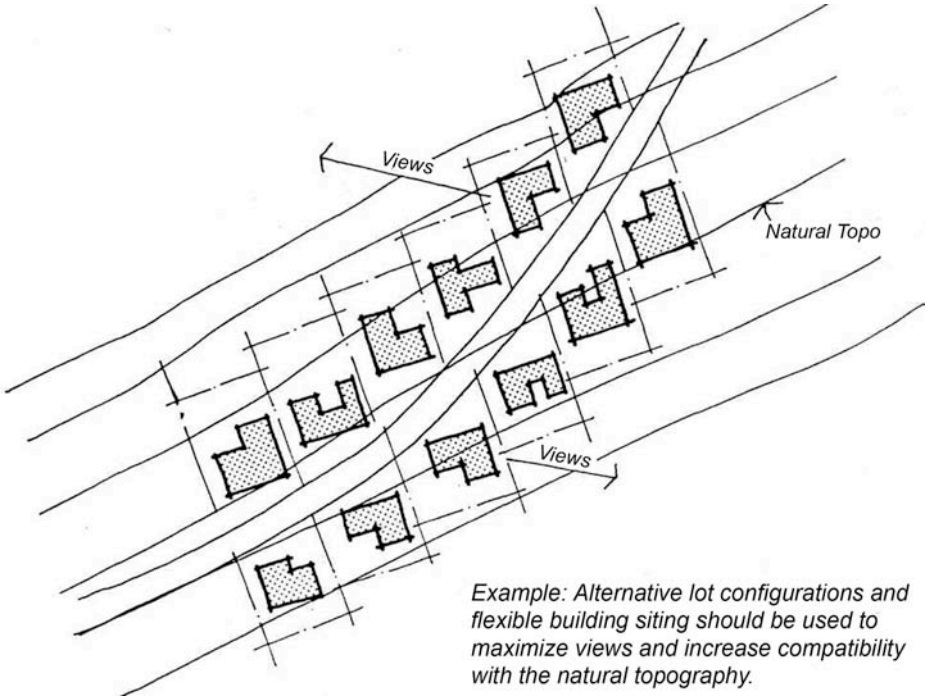
c. Unconventional structures with foundation adapted to the hillside conditions.





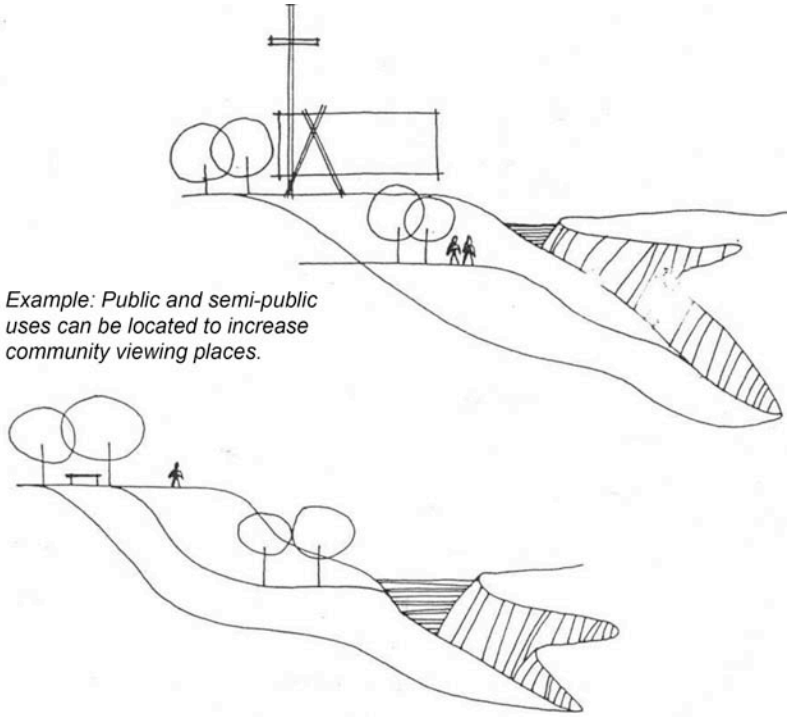
Note: Generalized illustrations show a range of possible foundations that may serve as a solution to a given hillside development problem.

12) Lots and structures should be oriented towards views and vistas of Mission Trails Park. For example, lots should be oriented at right angles to the contour lines in a staggered fashion instead of at right angles to the streets.



Example: Alternative lot configurations and flexible building siting should be used to maximize views and increase compatibility with the natural topography.

13) Utilize for community or public land use those portions of the hillsides most exposed to public view, or from which the widest views are possible.



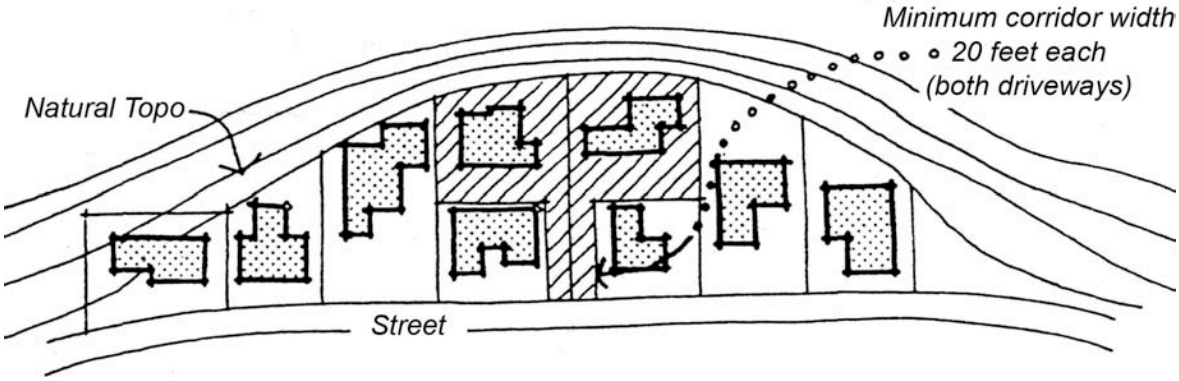
Example: Public and semi-public uses can be located to increase community viewing places.

14) Site major structures to show only a portion of themselves beyond the hill's brow or profile when viewed from important roads.

15) Do not obscure the hillside foot at the end of streets perpendicular to Mission Trails Park, with the exception as outlined in #16 below.

16) Only buildings of significance to the entire community should be allowed at the ends of streets perpendicular to Mission Trails Park.

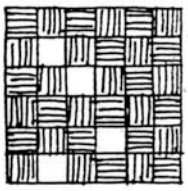
17) Where the available building area is limited by topography, and/or in order to provide better views from proposed structures, flexible siting techniques should be utilized. More specifically, the sizes and shapes of lots, and setback requirements shall be permitted to vary from the requirements of the underlying zone. No minimums shall be required except where "panhandle" lots are included in the development. The minimum width of corridor should be 20 feet, and the maximum length, 150 feet. Such corridor shall be part of the panhandle lot.



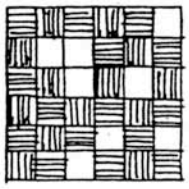
18) Do not exceed equilibrium in the structure-vegetation relationship.

Natural site vegetation is the ground.

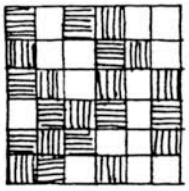
Development starts. Structure is the figure.



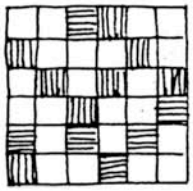
Development continues.



Equilibrium attained when development covers 40-50% of area.



Figure/ground ratio reverses. Hillsides lose character.



19) The paved surface ground in a given development shall not exceed 45 percent of the total development area, in order to support the natural system of drainage. Paved surface ground includes structure foundations, driveways, patios, sidewalks, parking areas and streets.

20) At least three of the following techniques shall be employed to limit the amount of paved surface and further reduce interference with the natural drainage system:

    a) Clustered design as previously described.

    b) Grading of foundation area only, or open type foundations as previously described.

    c) Raised wood decks instead of concrete slabs for patios, driveways and parking.

    d) Common driveways or cul-de-sacs, and narrow streets for access.

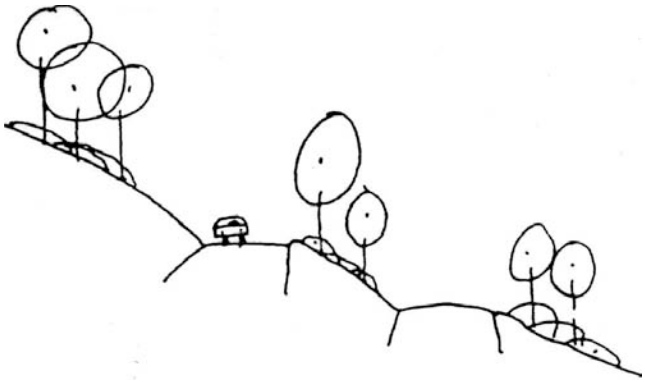
    e) Elimination of paved sidewalks. Provision of street sidewalks should be a response to need rather than to arbitrary policy.

    f) Design of garage/parking space either under or over the structure depending on whether the lot is uphill or downhill from the street.

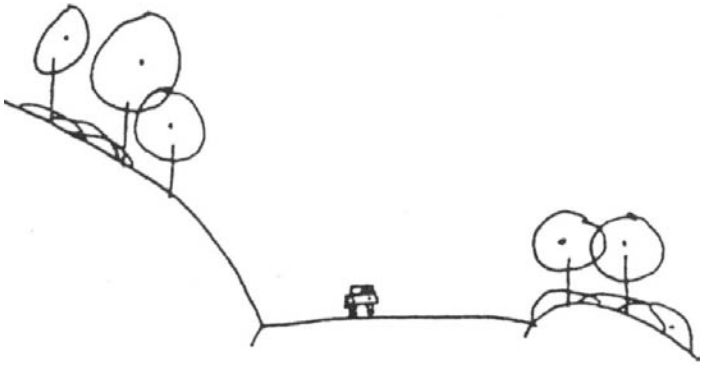
B. CIRCULATION/PARKING

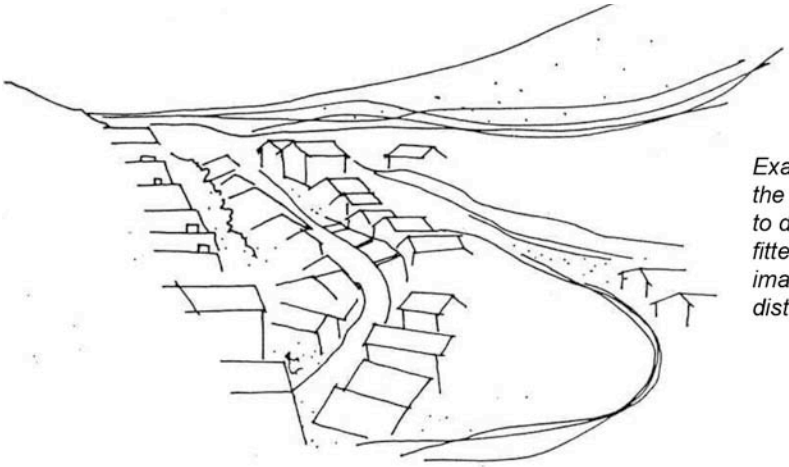
1) Street design in hillside areas should have the narrowest street width acceptable to the City Engineer, based on the anticipated average daily traffic in a given development, parking needs, safety considerations, probable vehicle speeds and limitations imposed by sight distances, climate, terrain and maintenance needs.

2) One-way street and split level roads should be used wherever possible to avoid excessive earth moving and to reduce the amount of paved surface which interferes with natural drainage and vegetation.



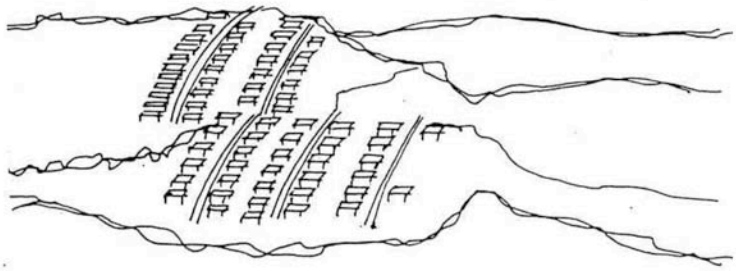
3) Street design in hillside areas should follow the natural contours of the land in order to avoid excessive cut and fill, discourage speeding, minimize erosion, create more varied views, and emphasize the hillside topography.





Example: Good circulation "fits" the lay of the land. It is less likely to be so visible as to destroy the character of the area. A well fitted circulation system permits more imaginative subdivisions and avoids disturbing natural drainage patterns.

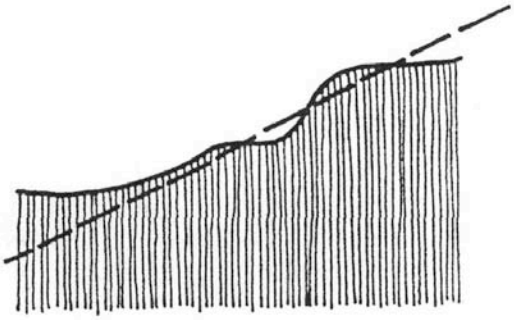
Example: A conventional development, where a number of lots are arbitrarily carved out of the site, demonstrates how a grid of straight lines superimposed on a curving hill may work on paper, but doesn't work on the site.



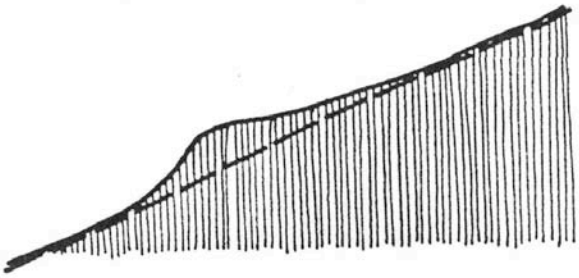
4) Where it is impossible to follow natural contours due to technical considerations (e.g. soil/geologic conditions, length and purpose of street, etc.) the street design can be a straight line on a curving hill.

   Streets at right angles to contours can provide a panoramic view of Mission Trails Park. As the grid plummets up and down the hills the views open out for everyone to enjoy.

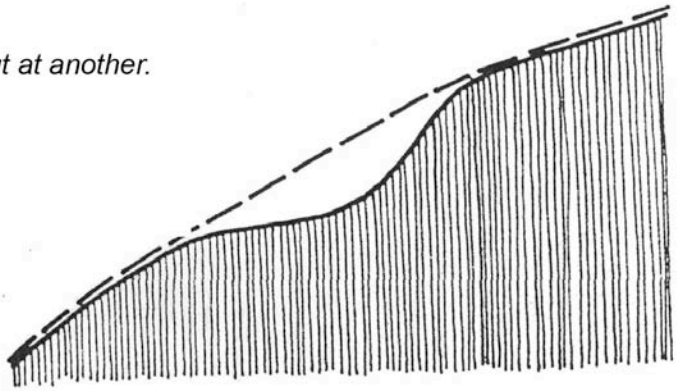
5) Streets should be located on ridges or valleys to minimize cut and fill. If a street must be located between a ridge and a valley, the following methods should be used:



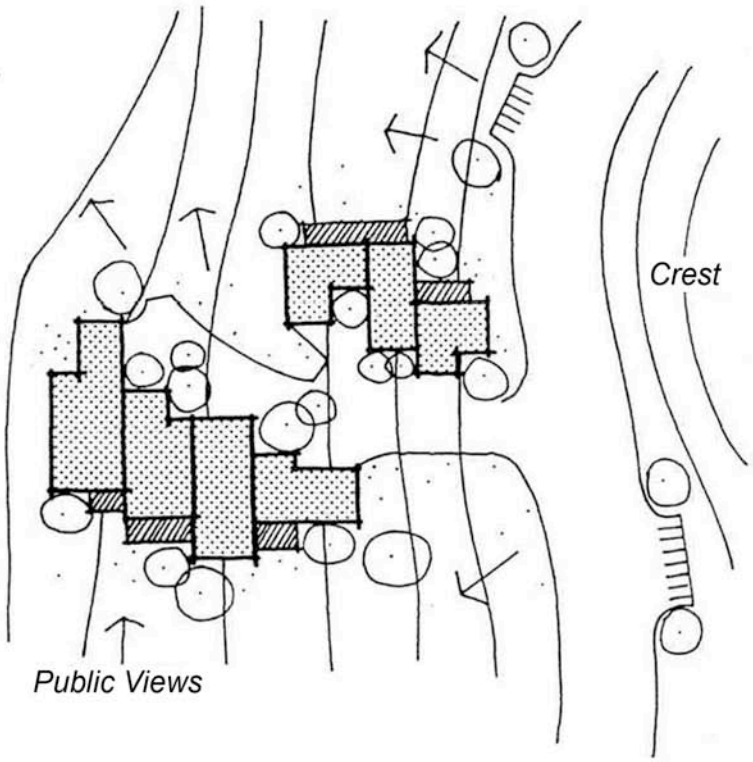
Example: Half cut, half fill at any given section.

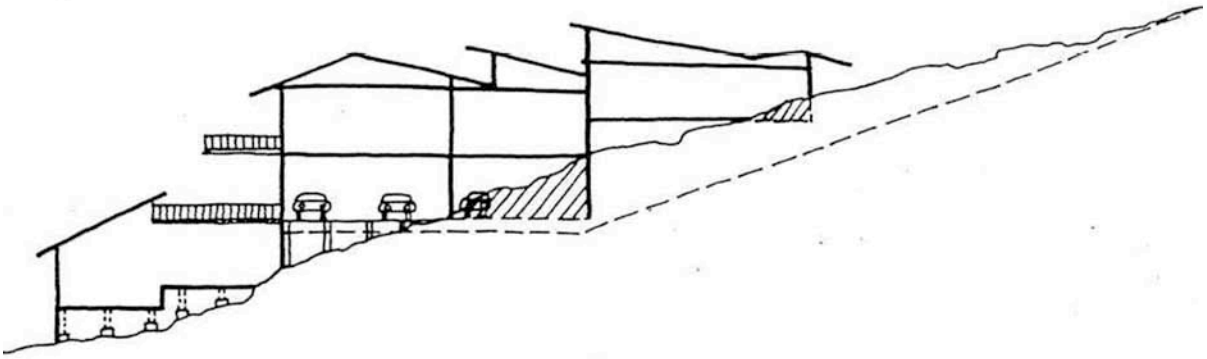


Example: All fill at one point, all cut at another.



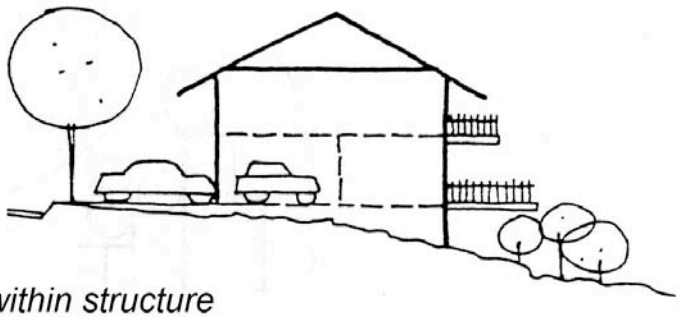
6) Streets should follow and/or end in views from the crest of hillsides. Wherever possible, development facing the park should be set below road grade to preserve public views of the park from the roadway.



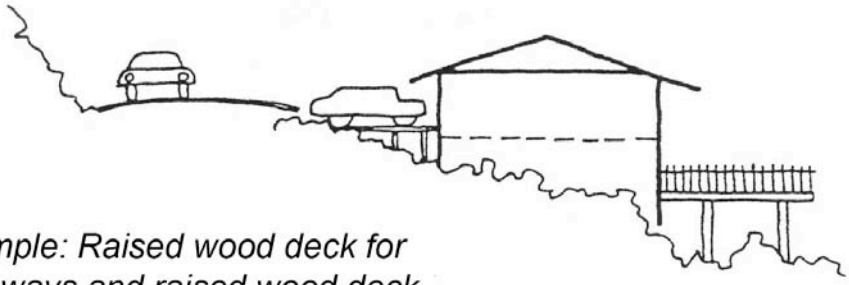


7) Aim streets directly at Mission Trails Park to create sightlines for maximum visual impact.

8) Large parking requirements for a cluster development should be met with multiple small parking areas, at different levels, rather than by a single, large parking area.



Example: Parking within structure



Example: Raised wood deck for driveways and raised wood deck for patios

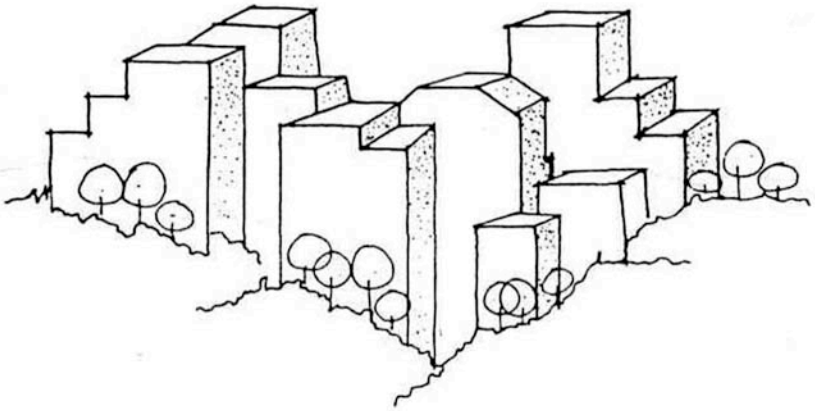
9) Individual unit parking requirements should be incorporated within the structure. Wherever possible, use raised decks for driveways to protect natural drainage.

10) In multiple "step down" development, common parking areas or garages should be located in the middle of the project. Pedestrian walkways should connect parking and residential areas. Walkways with handrails may be essential in steep areas.

11) A pedestrian walkway system should be provided to ensure access to locations offering unusual overlooks or other particularly interesting physical features. Walkways in locations away from streets generally should be lighted and integrated into the project enabling visual surveillance of the walkway from nearby residences.

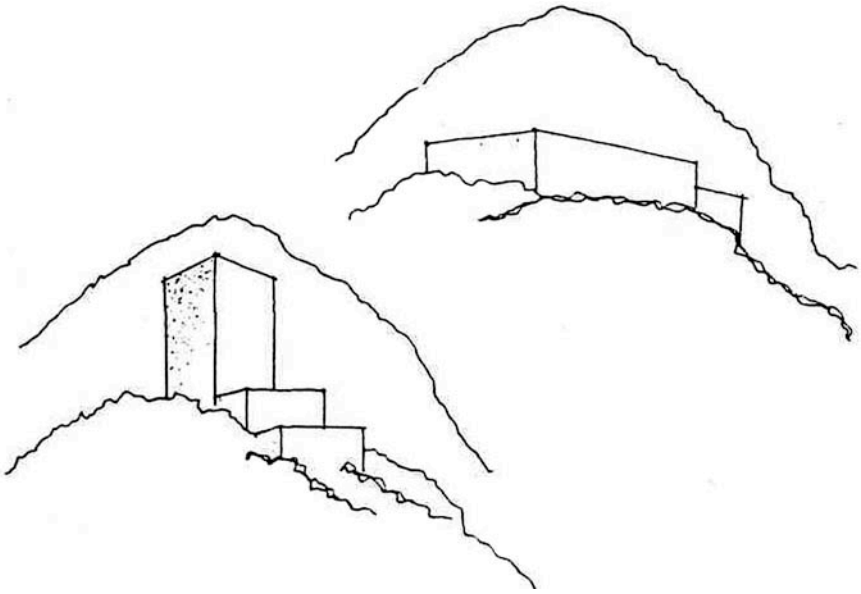
C. BUILDING DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

1) Irregular architectural edges should be used to interlock structures with hillside contours and vegetation.

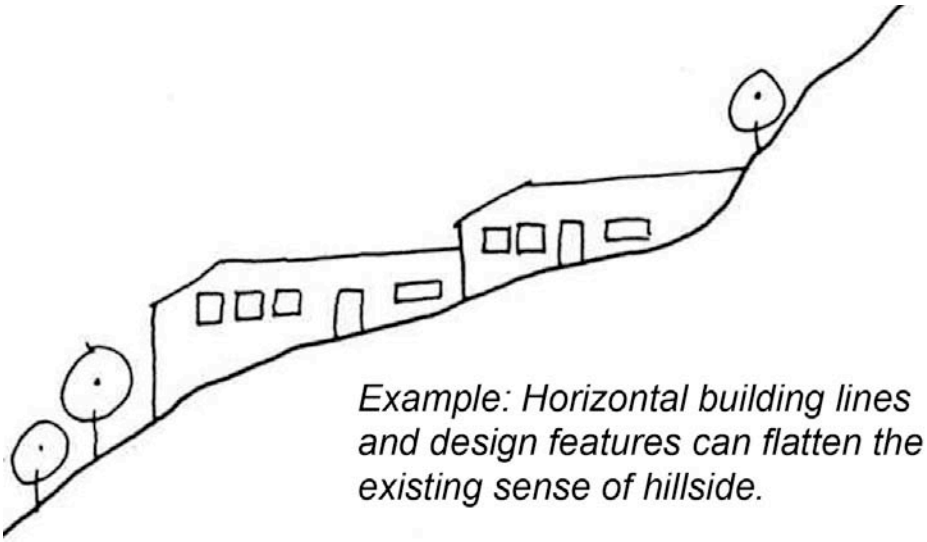


Example: Planting overlaps buildings' edges, especially at the foundation.

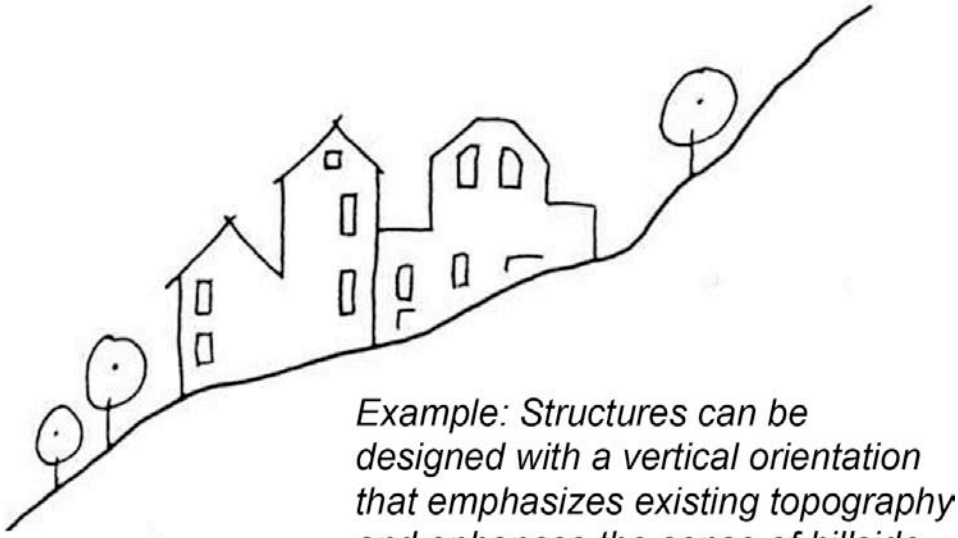
2) As seen on the face of the hillside or on the hilltop, buildings should appear higher than they are wide.



3) Development clusters should emphasize vertical lines in the exterior treatment of structures consistent with the vertical character of the hillside.



Example: Horizontal building lines and design features can flatten the existing sense of hillside.



Example: Structures can be designed with a vertical orientation that emphasizes existing topography and enhances the sense of hillside.

4) The treatment of rooftops should be varied since the visual prominence of rooftops on hillsides emphasizes monotony of materials, forms and colors. Rooftop utilities should be avoided except for solar type improvements. Such improvements, however, should be an integral part of roof design.

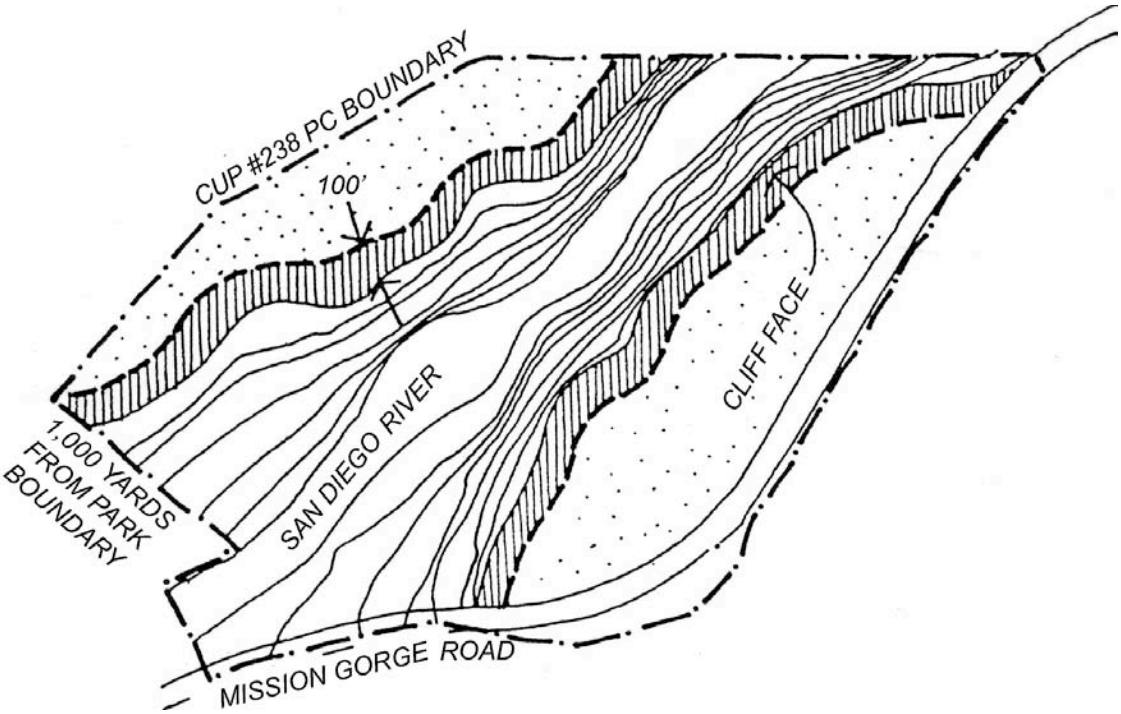
5) The mixture of residential types, although not necessarily possible or desirable in every hillside development, does provide a richness of visual experience and should be encouraged.

SUBAREA 3 - MISSION GORGE AREAS

POLICY: THE SAN DIEGO RIVER AREAS ADJACENT TO MISSION TRAILS REGINAL PARK SHOULD PROVIDE VISUAL LINKAGES TO AND FROM THE PARK.

A. The following design principles should apply to the western Mission Gorge area within Subarea 3 of the Mission Trails Design District:

1) When applicable, new developments adjacent to the San Diego River should be setback 100 feet from the cliff face.

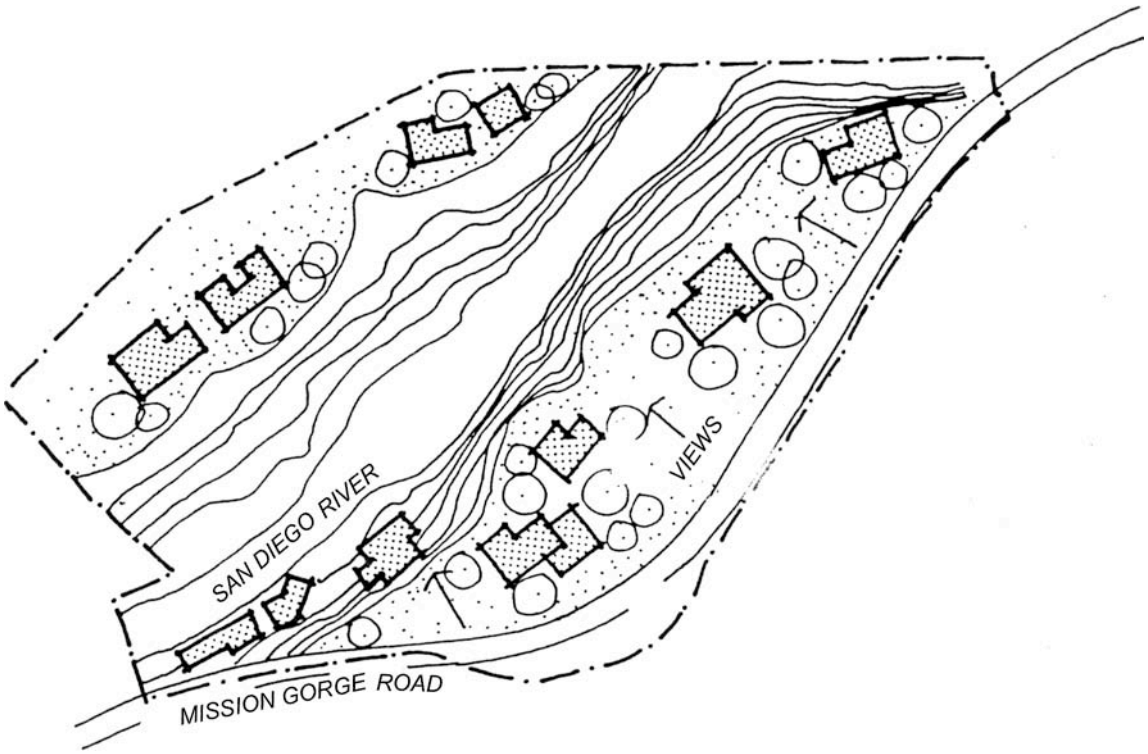


2) In the event property used for natural resource extraction is developed for uses not directly related to such operations, the following principles should apply:

a. Development within the 100-year frequency flood contours should comply with the regulations of applicable floodway and floodplain fringe zones, and Council Policy 600-14 “Development Proposals within Floodplains.”

b. Structures should be sited and designed to preserve public views of the San Diego River from Mission Gorge Road.

3) The rear elevations of buildings which face the San Diego River should be as well detailed and visually interesting as the front elevations.



4) Structures should be designed to step back from the San Diego River's floodway so that low-story buildings are adjacent to the river with the higher stories tiered away from the river.

5) No parking area shall be located between the building wall line and the San Diego River unless a landscaped buffer is provided between the parking area and the required setback from the river.

B. The City-owned portion of the eastern Mission Gorge area within Subarea 3 of the Mission Trials Design District should be retained as an open space linkage to the Regional Park, and for future inclusion in the San Diego River Regional Park System.

C. The privately-owned portion of the eastern Mission Gorge area within Subarea 3 of the Mission Trails Design District should conform to the following principles:

1) Development within the 100-year frequency flood contours should comply with the regulations of applicable floodway and floodplain fringe zones, and Council Policy 600-14 "Development Proposals within Floodplains."

2) Structures should be located in park-like surroundings.